United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/24

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the International Council of Women and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65290 (E) 150110

Please recycle

Statement

1. The member organizations of Project Five-O, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and the International Council of Women, which hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), whereby Governments committed to: eliminate violence against women; enhance the position and numbers of women in power and decision-making; and institute mechanisms for the advancement of women.

2. Since 1980 the Project Five-O partnership has provided vocational training, education and employment opportunities for thousands of women and girls in developing countries and the countries in transition. Through locally based programmes funded by Project Five-O, women and girls of all ages have acquired the skills necessary for their economic security and personal development. They have gained the confidence to enter more fully into the activities of their communities, thus influencing the decisions that affect their lives and the well-being of their families. Building the capacity of women within their communities has been at the heart of Project Five-O's mission and the organizations take pride in this long-term and ongoing commitment. The partnership prepares and supports local, national and international advocacy initiatives that make a positive difference to the lives of women and their families. In addition, members, within their own organizations, carry out their programmes in awareness-raising, advocacy and action in order to advance the status of women.

3. Many of the women helped by the partnership have had to take on the responsibility of heads of households, becoming the bread winners and the caregivers for the sick. They were often ill-equipped to take on these tasks. Project Five-O programmes provide the training and support to enable the women and girls to meet these challenges. The partnership believes strongly in the empowerment of women and girls through education and training, enabling them to have better employment opportunities and to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and the number and spacing of children. The Project also applauds the fact that, year after year, girls in greater numbers are now in primary education in developing countries, and it urges national Governments to renew their efforts to make secondary education accessible for all girls. Project Five-O also calls on Governments to make a collective commitment to work with the private sector to increase the proportion of women in decision-making roles on all levels.

4. Project Five-O is keenly aware of the vulnerability of women and girls in the global level of poverty, underdevelopment and lack of education, which, in some societies, is worsened by armed conflict, natural and manmade disasters, gender inequality and violation of human rights. Project Five-O supports, without reservation, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly in 2001 at its special session on HIV/AIDS. The Declaration outlined measures to be taken at national, regional and global levels to curb the spread of AIDS and reduce its impact on society. Reports reveal that females suffering from HIV/AIDS now outnumber men and that, of all the new cases, 40 per cent are between the ages of 15 and 25 years of age and the majority of those are women. Of great concern to Project Five-O is the impact of these figures on family life and the

development of communities where women are the mainstay, the carers and, increasingly, the breadwinners.

5. Project Five-O is concerned that progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in the current global economic climate presents a reduction in commitment and resources. A worldwide economic slowdown diminishes the income of the poor, pushing more families into poverty. Some advances of course cannot be undone. Debt, once cancelled, cannot be reinstated, and primary education completed cannot be taken away. The problems facing many Governments at this time must not detract from the long-term efforts of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Project Five-O urges national Governments to remain focused on breaking the circle of poverty by encouraging initiatives that empower and enlighten women through education and vocational training that enable families to thrive and sustainable communities to develop. Gender equality that recognizes, respects and values the traditional caring role of women is essential to developing shared responsibility within families and communities. Gains already made in establishing such gender equality will be eroded away if the political will of Member States is lacking and financial resources are not maintained.

7. Violence against women has been recognized in the Beijing Platform for Action as an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Non-governmental organizations have urged the United Nations to recognize violence against women as a human rights violation and, as a result, Governments are introducing legislation dealing with domestic violence and establishing commissions to address violence against women.

8. Project Five-O has worked with a wide range of partners to advance women's human rights, empower and help women access social and economic opportunities, free of violence, poverty and discrimination. The system as it now exists is simply not working well enough to deliver effective results to improve women's lives around the world. It urgently needs to be improved and strengthened.

9. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, together with its Optional Protocol, which empowers the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hear complaints of rights violations brought by individuals, is one of the main human rights conventions of the United Nations and an invaluable tool for implementing the provisions contained in the Platform for Action on eliminating violence against women. To date, 186 countries have ratified the Convention and 99 of those countries have ratified the Optional Protocol. The year 2010 marks the thirty-first anniversary of the Convention and the eleventh anniversary of the Optional Protocol.

10. The Convention's thirty-first anniversary provides an occasion to celebrate its near-universal ratification, as well as the recent progress that has been made at national levels to implement the Convention and make true gains for women's and girls' rights on a practical, everyday level. Because of this Convention and the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action, several countries now have national action plans to combat violence against women. In addition, laws and policies are being adopted to strengthen women's economic security and rights in such vital areas as decent employment and access to credit and markets. But there is more work to be done. The leadership that has already been demonstrated should provide

a platform to support States that lack the knowledge, commitment or legal framework to fully implement the Convention within their jurisdictions.

11. Project Five-O therefore stresses the importance of the Convention to women and States on this thirtieth anniversary, calling on all Member and Observer States to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol without any reservations in order to help achieve the goal of a world free of violence against women, as envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action.

12. Project Five-O supports the General Assembly of the United Nations on the unanimously adopted landmark resolution on system-wide coherence, resolution 63/311, which will lead to the creation of a strong unified women's rights and gender equality entity led by an Under-Secretary-General.

13. Recognizing that the fifteenth anniversary of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing plus 15) is approaching with many of its promises still unfulfilled, Project Five-O demands that progress on forming the new gender entity be visible by the time of the review by the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2010. We urge Member States to agree without further delay on a proposal and come to agreement on outstanding issues such as the governance of the new entity. We urgently request that donor countries pledge substantial funding to enable the $1 billion target to be reached in order to support the proposed strong field operations that the entity must have if the promises made by Governments and the United Nations to deliver results for women on the ground are to be realized.

14. Realizing the vital role that civil society organizations have always played in the work of the United Nations in women's rights, we urge Member States and the Secretary-General to commit to the systematic and ongoing participation of civil society, particularly women's organizations, at every stage of the process at global, regional, national and local levels.

15. We stress that, in order to deliver for women everywhere, there must be systematic and meaningful participation of civil society representatives in the governance structure, as well as in the operations of the new women's agency. Recognizing the critical importance of tapping into the grass-roots expertise of non-governmental organizations, the Gender Entity Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign has proposed the creation of civil society advisory bodies at the global, regional and national levels and has requested that a mechanism be developed for ongoing input from non-governmental organizations into the governance of the new gender entity.

16. Project Five-O calls on the Secretary-General to select a strong leader with significant stature, competence, credibility and experience in gender equality and women's human rights in order to ensure the necessary status required for representation and decision-making at the highest levels and to effectively drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. The new entity should promote gender mainstreaming by the integration of gender equality and women's human rights throughout the United Nations and especially in the United Nations country pilots and in all the United Nations reform processes. We ask that the selection of an Under-Secretary-General take place before the intergovernmental negotiations in March 2010, in accordance with the selection criteria developed by the Gender Entity Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign for that post.

17. In conclusion, Project Five-O further calls on the leadership of the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and Member States to facilitate the intergovernmental process in an expeditious but effective manner in order to launch the new gender equality entity in 2010.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/25

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent DePaul and Salesian Missions, Inc., non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65296 (E) 220110

Please recycle

Statement

1. As international non-governmental organizations committed to direct service with those living in poverty and witnessing daily the struggles of those who are most vulnerable and powerless in their societies, we welcome the opportunity to review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) during the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. We recognize that progress has been made in implementing the Beijing Platform and in advancing the Millennium Development Goals. But we believe that more concrete action must be taken to advance the fundamental human rights of all women and that it must have the protection of law. It is not enough that laws exist to protect the rights of women; the laws must also be enforced. Additionally, we hold that legalized injustice must be stricken from the judicial systems of countries that have prevented women from having equality before the law.

2. We note the work of the General Assembly in advocating for and advancing the legal empowerment of the poor and hold that those efforts, if brought to fruition, will advance the Beijing Platform and assist in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Since those living in poverty are disproportionately women and poverty is more and more feminized, the work of legal empowerment must be hastened to assist women.

3. Informal rules are frequently the only laws that people know, some traditional, others more recent. The system of informal laws and customs, however, often leaves the disempowered vulnerable to corruption, exploitation, bureaucratic interference and indifference. The imposition of laws unfamiliar to the community and its traditions work against community cohesiveness. Additionally, while some customary legal systems are strong in advocating for restorative justice, others can be brutal and discriminatory, often against women.

4. Issues needing to be addressed are set out below.

5. Legal empowerment of those living in poverty begins with ensuring that women have identity and voice. Too often, those living in poverty do not have, or are denied, a recognized identity that corresponds to their civic and economic agency as citizens, asset holders, workers and businesswomen. Ease of access to systems and agencies to record births and obtain legal documents is essential for empowering women and girls. Without allowing those living in poverty to speak and to have a voice, a legal empowerment process cannot exist. We advocate the creation of mechanisms to enable women and girls living in poverty to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Information and education about basic human and legal rights must be provided, and opportunities to speak and present their opinions and ideas must be made available to the most vulnerable populations.

6. The exclusion that results from poverty was powerfully expressed in a World Bank report in which a woman from Latvia was quoted as saying that poverty means humiliation, the sense of being dependent and being forced to accept rudeness, insults and indifference when we seek help.[1]

[1] World Bank, *World Development Report 2000-2001*.

7. When one lacks opportunities and resources and is treated as undeserving of respect, it diminishes an individual's political, social, cultural and economic freedom. Additionally, as one is anxious about survival, work replaces healthy human relationships, both within families and in communities. It breaks down people's sense of creativity, productivity and self-respect, inhibiting their hope for better lives and dramatically reducing the capacity for human development.[2] Above all, to be poor means to be insignificant.[3]

8. Legal empowerment of the poor leads people from exclusion to inclusion. This leads to important economic, political, social and moral changes in a society because all citizens become stakeholders. Additionally, inclusion helps reduce the stresses created by refugee migrations, underdevelopment, environmental disasters, hunger, disease and conflict. Given our global interdependence, all societies will be aided by each nation guaranteeing the protections of law to its citizens and living up to its responsibilities under it.

9. Women constitute half the world's population but own only 10 per cent of the world's property. A chief concern of legal empowerment is changing existing laws that exclude women from ownership of land. In some instances, this is due to laws that do not allow women to purchase land, and in others because they cannot legally inherit land from their families or land they shared with their husbands. Women often face forcible eviction from their homes and their land (land over which they had customary or other rights) by family members, traditional authorities and/or neighbours.[4]

10. Legal protection for informal work must also be provided. Women are more likely than men to work in the informal economy. In developing countries, excluding those in North Africa, over three in five women performing non-agricultural work are informally employed. In countries where they are allowed to work, women account for 30 to 90 per cent of street vendors and 35 to 80 per cent of home-based workers.[5] Over four fifths of home-based industrial outworkers in the developing world are women, and women predominate in the lowest categories of informal work, typically earning less than men. Because of this, they are not afforded legal protection and are often denied access to greater sums of money to begin or expand their microbusinesses.

11. The underlying causes include the following:

(a) A number of societies and cultures throughout the world have hierarchical and patriarchal power structures that make it difficult to facilitate legal empowerment. Involving those living in poverty in decision-making processes and giving women equal rights can be particularly challenging in these contexts. In some societies, local customs may run contrary to a vision of human rights enshrined in a national constitution, particularly where it comes to the treatment of women and minorities. Similarly, it can be difficult to ensure minimum levels of accountability and transparency within customary structures. However, customs are

[2] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1999*.

[3] Gustavo Gutierrez, "Memory and Prophecy", *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, Daniel G. Groody, ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

[4] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Women's Right to Land and Natural Resources: some implications for a human-rights based approach", 1999.

[5] International Labour Organization, "Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture", 2002.

not rigid and unchanging and can adapt to changing circumstances. It is reasonable to strive for a process in which customary practices evolve in response to social development and human rights principles (see also Beijing Platform for Action, para. 224);

(b) The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are key issues of human rights and are basic conditions for social justice in all communities. They are the necessary foundation blocks on which to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples. They are essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Recommendations

12. The strategies embedded in the Beijing Platform for Action need to be implemented and the Millennium Development Goals must be achieved. We believe that legal empowerment will help this to be accomplished. We urge Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to:

- Ensure that everyone has the fundamental right to legal identity and is registered at birth.
- Repeal or modify laws and regulations that are biased against the rights, interests and livelihoods of poor people, especially women. Special emphasis must be placed on reforming inheritance laws to provide that male and female heirs receive equal consideration in land distribution and to prevent the disinheritance of women and girls.
- Create state and civil society organizations that work in the interest of the excluded and protect their legal and human rights.
- Utilize religious communities and indigenous spiritual traditions to transform the moral imperatives of legal empowerment into concrete plans of action for a society.
- Foster and institutionalize access to legal services so that those living in poverty, especially women, will know about laws and be able to take advantage of them.
- Work to ensure systemic change to overcome the exclusion of women by the legal system.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/26

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Third World Institute, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65443 (E) 210110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Thirty years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and 15 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, women all around the world still struggle for gender equality and respect for their human rights and freedoms. Despite certain progress, discrimination against women still prevails in all spheres of public life. The United Nations Member States still have not fully implemented their commitments to gender equality as an essential condition for sustainable economic and social development.

2. The Third World Institute is the host organization of the international secretariat of Social Watch, a network of civil society coalitions in over 70 countries that have monitored anti-poverty and gender equity policies since 1995. The Social Watch reports (see www.socialwatch.org) are based on the findings of citizen organizations around the world monitoring their own Governments and the analysis and processing of international statistics. Social Watch computes yearly a gender equity index to provide an internationally comparable benchmark of progress towards equity in education, economic empowerment and political voice for women.

3. The evolution of the gender equity index shows that in most countries, notable achievements have been accomplished as regards women's political participation and establishing gender quotas, inclusion in the labour market, developing institutional mechanisms for gender equality and legislation to address gender equality and violence against women, in particular domestic violence and trafficking.

4. However, there is an evident gap between legislation and implementation. The Social Watch national coalitions report setbacks in the struggle against poverty and for gender equality. The current financial and economic crisis has exacerbated gender inequalities throughout the world. This regression is also stressed in the United Nations *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*. It concludes that the crises may also hold back progress towards gender equality by creating new hurdles to women's employment. Their weaker control over property and resources, overrepresentation in piece-rate or vulnerable employment, lower earnings and lower levels of social protection make them, and their children, more vulnerable to the financial and economic crisis.

5. The reactions to the economic crisis have involved cutbacks in financing social services such as health care, child care, social protection and education in many countries. These cuts have contributed to increasing the risk of feminization of poverty. The estimates are that women will enter the post-crisis period with a heavier burden of unpaid work in a family and more difficult access to decent jobs and social services, if their rights are not effectively and fully protected, as demanded by international human rights documents.

6. What is also worrying is the absence of women's participation in solving the crisis and in economic decision-making. Gender equality machineries, women's groups and women experts are, as a rule, excluded from the process of shaping economic decisions at both national and international levels.

7. The Social Watch national reports indicate that both the national and the international responses to the global crisis present gender-unaware, business-as-

usual approaches including a further deregulation and liberalization of markets and trade as solutions to dilute the crisis. The lack of reference to the States' accountability for their commitments to implement international human rights standards suggests that States consider that they may lessen them in times of crisis.

8. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as other human rights standards, should provide a binding framework for accountability of States and non-State actors, as well as international financial institutions. The accountability mechanisms should include gender-based statistics, gender-responsive indicators and gender-responsive budgeting, together with a human rights-based approach, to strengthen women's empowerment and contribute to achieving gender equality and social justice. The road map to prosperity for all is to invest in people and gender equality.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/27

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65449 (E) 270110

Please recycle

Statement

1. On the occasion of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions take this opportunity to express our unequivocal support for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century). We mark our commitment to and continued affirmation of the struggle for the full recognition and fulfilment of women's human rights and security in all spheres and continue to work to ensure the participation of women in achieving those goals.

2. We recognize and applaud the efforts prior to and beyond the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to ensure and enhance women's equal participation in all decision-making processes. They extend from the recognition in article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the right of equal political participation, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the basis provided in articles 4, 7 and 8 thereof for initiatives to enhance women's equal participation in all areas of public life, to the urging by the Security Council in its resolution 1325 (2000) that Member States ensure increased representation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and General Assembly resolution 58/142 on women and political participation as well as the reiteration in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the reviews thereof that women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.

3. We congratulate the General Assembly on its strong and unanimous support for the system-wide coherence resolution to create a new gender equality entity to be headed by a new Under-Secretary-General. In so doing, the General Assembly endorsed the efforts of women and their allies from around the world who have been advocating for three years for a stronger, better resourced agency on gender equality and women's empowerment. We look forward to the creation of this agency in early 2010, the fifteenth anniversary of the historic Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. In support of this agency, we similarly urge Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to begin immediately the recruitment process to appoint a strong leader grounded in women's rights and gender equality as the Under-Secretary-General who will lead this process of consolidating the four existing gender entities so that the appointee will be in place, and the new gender equality entity can be operational, by the time of the Beijing +15 review at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010.

4. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and Women's Action for New Directions likewise applaud the recent adoption by the Security Council of resolutions 1888 (2009) (to end violence against women) and 1889 (2009) (on women, peace and security). It is significant that resolution 1888 (2009) calls for the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative to lead and drive the work of the United Nations on addressing sexual violence in conflict. We believe it is vital for that Special Representative to have a holistic mandate that deals with the issue of sexual violence in the full context of women, peace and security, and we urge the United

Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to maintain the recognition reflected by it in its resolution 1889 (2009) that both of its recent resolutions are component parts of a larger and inseparable agenda for women, peace and security.

5. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions remind the Security Council that in addressing sexual violence it is important not to see women as either victims or agents of change. Rather, it is vital to understand that women, as powerful agents for peace, conflict resolution and change, may be at risk of sexual violence, and that those victimized by such violence do not as a consequence lose their power, voice or ability to participate as peacebuilders in their communities. We look forward to working with a Special Representative of the Secretary-General who understands and advocates this holistic approach and who works to address issues of protection from sexual violence in their full context of participation, empowerment, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This approach would take full advantage of the important groundwork laid by the Security Council in its resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), as well as the support and resources offered by a panoply of civil society groups eager to help the United Nations implement its agenda on women, peace and security.

6. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions further call on Member States to implement the Millennium Development Goals and broader development goals in a gender-centred manner, without which, 15 years beyond the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the full and effective participation of women remains severely restricted.

7. The full and effective participation of women in security decision-making forums continues to be exceptionally limited at both the local and global levels. While some attempts have been made to increase women's participation at the local level through enhanced training of peacekeepers and a gender mainstreaming action plan that calls for the recognition of women as actors in conflict situations, the Security Council still has only a single woman sitting at the Ambassador level. Member States share the responsibility for putting forward strong female as well as male candidates to these and other positions that carry increasing political power and influence.

8. We find it unacceptable that access to opportunities to work under humane and fair conditions and access to clean water and sanitation, health services and education remain beyond the reach of most women. We do not agree with the commodification and privatization of those essential services, especially in the light of the resultant disproportionate negative impact on women of such policies. Unequal access to resources and the resultant unequal economic power and persistent and pervasive underdevelopment is a form of violence in and of itself and, further, makes women particularly vulnerable to violence during both conflict and so-called times of peace. Without inclusive and sustainable development based on a system of gender equality, true and sustainable peace is impossible. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions call upon all States to therefore include a holistic gender perspective when allocating resources and developing programmes to implement the Millennium Development Goals and any other development

practices or projects and insists that the Commission on the Status of Women urge them to do so.

9. We call on Member States to act urgently to ensure that women and men have fair and equal access to natural, economic and political resources so as to ensure equal participation in decision-making in the various areas of public and private life, including participation in development. We call on governments to ensure that marginalized women, including widows, indigenous, disabled and minority women, are included in programmes and processes designed to improve and enhance the access of women to those resources.

10. We recognize that the participation of women in decision-making at all levels includes taking part in decisions involving the economy and trade and that the disproportionate negative effects of globalization on women makes their input in the decision-making of supranational institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the other Bretton Woods institutions, vital. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions call on Member States to provide mechanisms by which women are guaranteed an opportunity to provide input into the decision-making processes of those institutions at a local level and that those processes take into account the particular needs of women.

11. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Policy Forum and the Women's Action for New Directions reaffirm our commitment to work for collective human security and sustainable peace in collaboration with civil society and governmental and international actors, including within the United Nations system. We look forward to working with others around the world to dismantle the prevailing culture of militarism and create a culture of peace in which racism and discrimination, economic injustice, violence and every form of oppression are absent and in which women are full and equal participants.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/28

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65455 (E) 220110

Please recycle

Statement

1. **The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts believes the girl child must be at the centre of efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.**

2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states in section IV.L. that all barriers "must be eliminated to enable girls without exception to develop their full potential and skills through equal access to education and training, nutrition, physical and mental health care and related information". In addition, section IV.L. outlines strategic objectives to address violence, harmful cultural attitudes and practices to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls as well as to promote the awareness and participation of girls in their own lives and their societies.

3. Girls and young women suffer disproportionally in too many areas. Access to education and the quality of that education still has a significant gender bias. As food prices rise, hunger and poverty affect more people, with women and the young most at risk and girls the last priority. Climate change, lack of water and crises in fisheries and other natural resources destroy the future of girls and boys. Restrictive cultural practices limit girls' opportunities, constrain their role to that of caregiver and domestic helper and put them at risk of illness, neglect and violence. HIV/AIDS continues to have a more direct impact on the life chances of women and girls, and over 3 million girls a year still suffer the trauma and long-term consequences of female genital mutilation.

4. We know that girls and young women are the most crucial constituencies in our communities if we want to transform opportunities for all and ensure a sustainable future for humankind. There are more than 600 million girls living in the developing world, and one quarter of the population in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa is girls and young women aged 10 to 24. Transforming the lives of girls and young women is the beginning of a ripple effect. Taking a life cycle approach and addressing the needs and priorities of girls benefits young women, adults and older women. By empowering girls and the women they will become, entire families and communities are pushed out of poverty and away from hunger. Educated girls and young women earn more money, start their families later and have fewer children. When girls understand their own health and their rights, whole communities are healthier and safer. When girls are free from sexual violence, coercion and destitution, they are free from HIV and AIDS. When they are free of HIV/AIDS, their children are born healthy. Empowered girls become women who invest in their families and start a process of education and care that breaks the poverty cycle and changes family and community perceptions of girls from being a burden to being valued and worthy.

5. Despite knowing that investment in girls is the most powerful response to many of the dilemmas facing humankind, international progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and achieving the Millennium Development Goals is appallingly slow, and when directly concerning the girl child often even slower. Less than half a cent of every United States dollar spent on international assistance programmes is invested directly in girls.

6. Through its mission to "enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world", World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts is already placing the girl child at the centre of the solution. Education

and leadership programmes, community action and advocacy campaigns reach out to 10 million girls and young women and their communities in 145 countries.

7. **In order to rapidly and significantly improve the situation of girls around the world, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts recommends that the international community, Governments and civil society ensure that the girl child is placed at the centre of policy in the following four areas: girls' empowerment, education and training, adolescent health and rights, and participation in decision-making.**

Girls' empowerment

8. Girls' empowerment entails a process whereby girls gain more control over their lives, become active and valued members of their communities and are able to make informed choices about issues that directly affect them.

9. Discrimination against girls and young women can be based on class, race, ethnicity and age. Barriers include unequal power relations, limited opportunities for education, inadequate access to health care and services, cultural biases and poor economic conditions. As a result, girls and young women are disenfranchised and marginalized. They are subject to violence and abuse, with domestic violence the leading cause of women's injury and death, more so for girls and women aged 15 to 44 than malaria, war, traffic accidents and cancer combined.

10. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community, national Governments and civil society to empower girls by:

(a) **Providing** a safe and supportive environment in which girls and young women can cultivate their own set of values and grow in confidence;

(b) **Increasing** commitment and action on empowering girls and young women as a priority for policy and budget decisions;

(c) **Advocating** that the media, including new communications technologies, promote positive images of women and girls;

(d) **Involving** men and boys in dialogues on gender roles and encouraging positive interaction with women and girls;

(e) **Tackling** cultural gender discrimination and promoting gender equality.

Education and training

11. Seventy per cent of the world's 130 million out-of-school children are girls, and there are 42 million fewer girls than boys in primary school. Girls who miss out on primary education grow up to become the women who make up two thirds of the world's 875 million illiterate people, and every year of schooling lost represents a 10 to 20 per cent reduction in girls' future incomes.

12. Cultural and patriarchal family structures tend to prioritize the needs of boys over girls. Economic hardship can mean many parents often co-opt their children, especially girls, as additional labour resources. Other obstacles to girls' education include a shortage of school space, lack of female teachers, long distances to travel, unaffordable fees and cultural norms that reinforce women's traditional roles and violence against them. Even if girls are educated, their earning potential is often

lower than that of men, as fewer women study subjects that lead to economic success.

13. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization definition of education shows three distinct types: formal education, informal education and non-formal education, whereby non-formal education is organized educational activity outside of the established formal system that is intended to serve an identifiable learning clientele with identifiable learning objectives. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts believes that non-formal education makes a significant contribution to the full personal and social development of an individual. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has identified that involvement in girls' organizations over extended periods has a positive impact on girls' civic participation and in counteracting societal pressures.

14. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community, national Governments and civil society to ensure girls' free, quality and comprehensive education by:

(a) **Supporting** organizations involved in the promotion of the education of girls and young women;

(b) **Increasing** political commitment to give women's and girls' education a higher priority;

(c) **Introducing** poverty-reduction strategies to ensure that the right to education is the right of every child;

(d) **Eliminating** gender discrimination, including through the promotion of educational programmes that challenge traditional attitudes of men and boys towards women and girls;

(e) **Providing** universal access to basic social and educational services;

(f) **Recognizing** non-formal education as a positive method of learning.

Adolescent health and rights

15. Rapidly changing social and economic conditions around the world have a significant impact on the health of girls and young women. Today, girls face many risks from social, cultural, behavioural and environmental factors, as well as discrimination and a lack of access to health information, education and services.

16. Twenty-seven per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 in sub-Saharan Africa are married, and 28 per cent give birth by age 18. Every year, some 14 million adolescent girls give birth. Consequently, pregnancy complications and childbirth are the leading causes of mortality among girls between the ages of 15 and 19. In addition, female genital mutilation has affected 138 million women and girls in Africa, and the number continues to rise.

17. The AIDS epidemic has a disproportionate impact on women and young girls, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where three women are HIV-infected for every two men. Among young people (between the ages of 15 and 24), that ratio widens to three young women for every young man.

18. Sex is still a taboo topic and sexual education remains controversial in many countries. It is often difficult for girls and young women to get accurate and reliable information about sex and sexuality and to be able to talk freely and confidently about the issues they face, including birth control, pregnancy outside of marriage, teenage pregnancy, premarital sex, morality, abstinence and sexually transmitted infections.

19. Seven in every 10 of the world's hungry are girls and women. Most poor people who battle hunger deal with chronic undernourishment, resulting in stunted growth, weakness and heightened susceptibility to illness.

20. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community and national Governments to ensure that girls' and young women's health issues and concerns are addressed by:

(a) **Providing** girls and young women with appropriate education, information, skills and access to health services and counselling to enable informed and responsible health choices, including providing non-formal educational programmes for the social, personal and sexual development of girls and young women;

(b) **Alleviating** the constraints faced by women in accessing food and ensuring gender-responsive interventions to improve household food security and nutrition;

(c) **Providing** young women with opportunities to be involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of sexual education;

(d) **Supporting** youth organizations that provide safe spaces for girls and young women to discuss sex and sexuality free from discrimination;

(e) **Providing** opportunities for girls and young women to become economically and socially independent so that their health decisions are in their own hands and their economic and work choices do not put their health and well-being at risk.

Participation in decision-making

21. The world's population is young, and an estimated 87 per cent of the world's adolescents live in countries affected by poverty, hunger, disease and violence. Exposure to these problems without any chance to address the issues can lead to social despair, delinquency and alcohol and substance abuse. Girls and young women are especially absent from the decision-making process, an absence that continues into womanhood, with, for example, only 17 per cent of parliamentary seats in Africa held by women.

22. When children have the opportunity to identify the problems that affect their lives and, most importantly, find and implement the solutions, it builds their self-confidence and encourages them to value the positive impact they can have on the lives of others. If citizenship and community action are learned and practised by girls, the women they become will be compassionate leaders.

23. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts calls on the international community and national Governments to ensure that girls and young women are included in all decision-making processes by:

(a) **Ensuring** the right to freedom of expression and access to information for girls and boys on an equal basis;

(b) **Ensuring** that children, particularly girls, have access to decision-making processes at all levels;

(c) **Recognizing** children, particularly girls, as powerful agents of change in all areas of society;

(d) **Building** an intergenerational partnership based on mutual trust and respect and the development of shared goals;

(e) **Ensuring** equal representation of girls in all formal and informal decision-making bodies;

(f) **Challenging** the role of young men in society so that they take responsibility for their own activities and develop equal relationships with young women.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/29

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65461 (E) 270110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Zonta International is a worldwide organization of professional executives committed to improving the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women and girls through service and advocacy. Zonta International has as one of its organizational priorities the promotion of justice and universal respect for fundamental freedoms.

2. Zonta International funds projects that benefit and empower women and girls. Zonta members have provided more than $9.8 million to projects benefiting 2 million women in 14 countries, partnering with United Nations agencies and other aid groups.

3. The 33,000 Zonta members in 1,200 Zonta clubs in 67 countries carry out service projects and advocacy initiatives in their local communities that advance the status of women and girls.

4. Zonta International's United Nations representatives in New York, Geneva, Paris and Vienna participate actively and partner with like-minded organizations in activities that promote meaningful commitments and actions for women's rights and participation.

5. Zonta International viewed the founding of the United Nations as an opportunity to further on the international level its own goals for the advancement of women, women's rights and gender equality. At its international convention in 1946, Zonta International pledged support for the United Nations.

6. Former President of Zonta International and the first woman Assistant Secretary-General, Helvi Sipilä, was instrumental in the United Nations decisions to proclaim 1975 as International Women's Year and to hold the first World Conference on Women, which she chaired. Zonta members have participated in each of the four world conferences on women.

7. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with its 12 critical areas of concern accompanied by strategic objectives and related actions to be taken by Governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders at the national and international levels, has been a road map for framing Zonta International's programmes and advocacy.

8. Zonta's international service projects since Beijing reflect this commitment and include the following:

- Girls' education in South Africa (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF))
- Prevention of female genital mutilation in Burkina Faso (UNICEF)
- Reinventing India: preventing violence against women and girls (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM))
- Eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus in Nepal (UNICEF)
- Improving women's lives in Afghanistan (Afghan Institute of Learning)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina anti-trafficking community mobilization (STAR Network)
- Microcredit and health education for HIV/AIDS-affected women in the Niger (CARE)

- Education and leadership for girls and young women in the Plurinational State of Bolivia (CARE)
- Revival of rural community-based self-help initiatives in Sri Lanka (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)
- Reduction in the prevalence of obstetric fistula in Liberia (United Nations Population Fund)
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Rwanda (UNICEF)
- Safe cities for women in Guatemala and El Salvador (UNIFEM)

9. Zonta International is the largest non-governmental organization donor to UNIFEM and a contributor to the UNIFEM-administered United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Violence against women is a particular focus of Zonta International's efforts. Contributions to the Trust Fund and some service projects come from a special fund, Zonta International Strategies to Eradicate Violence against Women and Children.

10. Other Zonta International programmes address capacity-building for implementing the Platform for Action: the Amelia Earhart Fellowships for women pursuing a PhD in aerospace-related sciences or engineering; the Jane M. Klausman Women in Business scholarships for junior- and senior-level undergraduates seeking a business career; and the Young Women in Public Affairs Awards for 16- to 20-year-olds who have shown leadership in volunteer activities and are dedicated to the advancement of women.

11. The Zonta International United Nations Committee and Legislative Awareness and Advocacy Committee have encouraged all members to familiarize themselves with and use the Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Millennium Development Goals as the key components of their local, national and international efforts to advance the status of women and promote women's rights and gender equality.

12. Zonta has asked its members in each country to participate in each of the following ways in the Convention process: (a) to obtain and read their country's latest report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, focusing in particular on the concluding recommendations of the Committee; (b) to use the concluding recommendations as a basis for initiating advocacy to address the issues cited by the Committee as being of particular concern for women and girls in their country; (c) to take the initiative or partner with other organizations in researching and presenting information on impediments to the advancement of women at the country level when their country reports to the Committee; and (d) to advocate for universal ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol.

13. Zonta International is endeavouring to highlight to its membership the synergies between the comprehensive framework for women's empowerment and gender equality contained in the Platform for Action, the Convention and other commitments made by countries and the opportunities presented by the less gender-specific but widely embraced Millennium Development Goals. The Zonta International Legislative Awareness and Advocacy Committee Chairman prepared a chart for the use of Zonta members that shows which goals of Zonta International, which of the critical areas of concern from the Platform for Action and which

Millennium Development Goals each of the current international service projects is addressing.

14. Zonta International shares the concern voiced by many women's rights advocates that, although the Millennium Declaration refers to ensuring equal rights for men and women and highlights the importance of the Convention, only two of the Millennium Development Goals are gender-specific and the targets and benchmarks are not adequate measures of progress towards the achievement of the goal. For example, progress on Millennium Development Goal 3, "Promote gender equality and empower women", should not only be measured in terms of the ratio of girls to boys in school, but also include the completion rates at all levels for girls. In terms of employment, it is laudable that the 2005 Millennium Summit added the target of full and productive employment and decent work, but the gender gaps in earnings and sex-disaggregated data for unemployment rates are needed to measure real gender equality progress. The reality is that nearly two thirds of employed women in the developing world are own-account or unpaid family workers.

15. It is of deep concern that Millennium Development Goal 5, "Improve maternal health", is the furthest from the goal of achievement by the target date. More than 500,000 women die each year in childbirth alone. Two of Zonta International's projects during the current biennium, reducing the prevalence of obstetric fistula in Liberia and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Rwanda, address this important concern. Member States are to be commended for adding the additional Millennium Development Goal target of universal access to reproductive health to Goal 5, but more resources and greater leadership urgently need to be directed towards actualizing the goal of reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality rate in the period from 1990 to 2015.

16. One of the greatest impediments to the achievement of gender equality, women's empowerment and the Millennium Development Goals is, without question, the pandemic of violence against women throughout the world. Violence against women is often referred to, appropriately, as the "missing Millennium Development Goal". Government officials, opinion-makers, civil society organizations, religious figures, men and women and girls and boys must all work to instil gender equality as a way of life in all aspects of life. Lessons learned from the processes of Beijing and the Convention, which emphasize the necessity of systematically mainstreaming gender across all policy and programme initiatives rather than taking isolated actions, are essential in addressing violence against women, as well as to the fulfilment of all of the Millennium Development Goals.

17. It is widely and appropriately acknowledged that women are the key to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. Women in their multiple roles in family and community must be empowered through education, good health for all the family and opportunities to participate and have a voice. They must be the recipients of the actions needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, women must be the agents of change who, through such empowerment, will insist on sustainable, human development.

18. In order to accomplish the Millennium Development Goal commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering women, adequate and targeted resources must be deployed. The World Bank has reported that over 90 per cent of expenditures aimed at advancing gender equality have been aimed at so-called "sectoral" initiatives in such areas as agriculture, education and health care, not

"direct" gender-equality-promoting activities. By using the lens of the Platform for Action and other commitments and focusing on building the capacity of women's machineries and women's organizations and eliminating obstacles to equal access for women and girls by eliminating school fees or user fees, we might better accomplish Millennium Development Goal 3.

19. Zonta International joins with the many advocates for women's rights in applauding the unanimous resolution of the General Assembly to consolidate the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women into a composite entity headed by an Under-Secretary-General. We believe that this step will further the United Nations capacity for more effective and coherent development at the national level and will have a positive impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We trust that the new entity will have the resources and authority to greatly advance gender equality and women's empowerment for women worldwide.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/30

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65468 (E) 210110

Please recycle

Statement

1. The World Youth Alliance joins the international community in marking the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and welcomes this opportunity to review the Platform for Action and look to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through the lens of gender equality. Today, as globalization unfolds and new challenges and opportunities are presented, the rights of women, with their foundation in the intrinsic dignity of every human being, must claim our attention and direct our efforts in the work of fostering peace and sustainable development.

2. The recognition that all human beings have intrinsic dignity is the only foundation for human rights. It is the intrinsic worth of the human person that provides the basis on which to found policies and laws that create conditions under which human beings can flourish. Without such a foundation, human rights are articulated and enforced based upon the subjective preferences of those in power, thus undermining the entire human rights project and leading to violations of human rights.

3. On this anniversary, we recall that the rights of women have not always been recognized or respected throughout history. This was primarily because women were not viewed as having equal dignity to men. Today, although some progress has been made, women remain undervalued in the modern world for the contributions they make to their families and to society at large. Much of the work performed by women daily goes unrecognized because it does not produce immediately tangible results in a society where the pressure to "perform" and produce wealth quickly are primary values.

4. What are women's rights, and why do they need special recognition? If all human beings are equal in dignity, what rights do we attribute specifically to women? The most obvious and pressing are the reproductive rights relating to maternal health. Women in the developing world still die in childbirth at incredible rates, owing primarily to complications during pregnancy and insufficient access to emergency obstetric care. Protection of women's rights requires addressing this problem as a primary response to women, in order to respect their dignity.

5. The World Youth Alliance will evaluate the implementation of the Platform for Action in the light of the dignity of the human person and the needs of women in the area of maternal health. More particularly, we will examine the problems that currently exist in terms of guaranteeing access to reproductive health care when the dignity of women is not viewed as the foundation of women's rights.

Maternal health at the heart of development

6. Millennium Development Goal 5, on maternal health, is the Goal towards which the least progress has been made 10 years after the global commitments to address key areas affecting global poverty. In fact, maternal mortality is rising in the developing world.[1] The health-care needs of women are in many ways different from those of men, and special care is needed to guarantee that they are met, particularly in relation to maternal health, which is foundational to the health and life of women, their families and their communities. Access to basic maternal

[1] *Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, United Nations (New York, 2008), pp. 24-25.

health-care needs, such as skilled birth attendants, pre- and post-natal care and treatment for obstetric fistula, are still severely lacking in rural areas. Increasing numbers of women are not receiving the necessary care to ensure the safe delivery of their children.

7. Our response to maternal mortality must be founded on the dignity and worth of women themselves and on their aspirations and desires to found a family and bear children. The right of all persons to found a family, determine the number and spacing of children and have access to maternal health care is firmly established in international law.[2] In order to respect this right, the State must work to provide the infrastructure necessary to deliver basic emergency maternal health in even the most rural areas.

8. Maternal health occupies a special place in our efforts to achieve development because the health of women — particularly mothers who have formed families — is critical to achieving development at the most local levels. The family is the fundamental unit of society, responsible for the protection of new life and the formation of the next generation in solidarity. Women exist at the heart of family life; their death during childbirth threatens the entire development project of their family, village and society. The health of children depends on the health of the mother. Healthy children are drivers of development and prosperity.

9. We know that maternal health is a condition for development, since children are 10 times more likely to die prematurely if their mother has died.[3] A motherless daughter has an increased risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation. A motherless boy has an increased chance of being exploited for forced labour, and the family is more exposed to risks associated with contracting HIV/AIDS. The health of the entire family is threatened when a mother dies as a result of childbirth. Poverty, instability and human rights violations are the results.

10. To achieve Millennium Development Goal 5, we must separate the right to maternal health from debates regarding access to abortion and family planning. The Goal itself distinguishes between reducing the maternal mortality ratio and "access to reproductive health".[4] The women who are currently at risk of dying in large numbers across the developing world have already made the decision to bear children and require services to ensure their own health before, during and after pregnancy, and to ensure the health of their newborn children. Efforts to lower the rate of maternal mortality are misguided when the overarching presumption is that women would rather not have children at all. When funding is directed only to the areas of family planning and abortion, this presumption prevents women from realizing their human rights in the area of maternal health, rights that are specific to them and lie at the heart of the Beijing Platform for Action, and are also reiterated throughout international legal instruments.

11. Statistics show that maternal morbidity is highest in the rural areas of developing countries. This means that most women are dying because they cannot reach hospitals or physicians when there are complications during pregnancy or at

---

[2] Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, para. 7.12; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16; and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, article 12.

[3] United Nations fact sheet on Millennium Development Goal 5 (2008), p. 1.

[4] http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal5.cfm.

delivery. The developed world reports no difference between rural and urban women in terms of maternal mortality rates; this is due to the presence of functional health delivery systems, which include the training and deployment of skilled birth attendants. Health delivery systems must be created and made available in order to ensure maternal health in the developing world. Health-care delivery systems that can address obstetric complications are the primary factors in reducing maternal deaths.[5]

12. Respect for women's rights requires the commitment to providing maternal health-care delivery systems to all women, including those living in rural areas.[6] Attempting to solve the problem of maternal morbidity by encouraging women to have fewer children is not a gender-sensitive response, and, in fact, violates the rights of women. The exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms guarantees a woman's and a couple's right to determine the number and spacing of their own children. Policies must focus on providing the support and medical care that women and families want and require so as to enable women to bear their children with adequate medical care.

13. In conclusion, the international community faces the reality that Millennium Development Goal 5 is the farthest from being achieved and that maternal mortality in the developing world remains very high. The Platform for Action cannot be implemented without making progress on maternal health, as all development goals and society in general depend on the health of women who are mothers. Progress in the area of maternal health can be achieved only if the issue is addressed separately from that of the provision of family planning services, as maternal health policies must consider the desire of the woman to found a family, and States parties must recognize the irreplaceable social contribution that women make in bearing and raising children and in forming them as citizens to participate in the development of each particular society. States that do not recognize this critical contribution — and do not provide the necessary basis for providing maternal health care — cannot develop, since they ignore the fundamental basis of social progress. Without healthy mothers, children and families, social development cannot occur. Only a system that respects the intrinsic dignity of the human person will recognize and respect the development needs of women and invest in the future of society.

---

[5] http://www.unfpa.org.br/lacodm/arquivos/mdg5.pdf, p. 278.

[6] *Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*, p. 25.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/31

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65547 (E) 210110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) is an international organization of sociologists dedicated to improving women's lives and creating feminist social change. Through our teaching, research, publications and activism, we educate and sensitize the sociological profession, other scholars and the public with regard to the social, political and economic problems of women. We publish a highly regarded professional journal, *Gender & Society*, and a quarterly newsletter, "Network News", and maintain a website, www.socwomen.org, that publicizes resources for the sociological community and beyond. Recent scholarly work in *Gender & Society* examines the issues of women and war,[1] intimate partner violence,[2] human trafficking and prostitution,[3] female genital mutilation[4] and women in United States prisons.[5]

2. As sociologists dedicated to improving women's lives, we strongly affirm strategic objective D.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action, aimed at preventing and eliminating physical, sexual and psychological violence against women and girls. Sociological research has underlined the social origins of violence against women and girls[6] and the need for Government intervention to protect vulnerable members of society.[7] In this regard, we express dismay over continuing and egregious violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, particularly the vicious sexual attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These organized attacks have targeted young girls as well as women, causing massive physical, psychological and social damage to the health and well-being of women and girls.[8] Armed combatants attack with impunity, confident that they will not be held accountable by police or judicial authorities.[9] The international response to such

---

[1] Najafizadeh, Mehrangiz, 2003, "Women's empowering carework in post-Soviet Azerbaijan", *Gender & Society*, 17(2); Murphy, Erin L., 2009, "Women's anti-imperialism, 'the white man's burden,' and the Philippine-American war: theorizing masculinist ambivalence in protest", *Gender & Society*, 23(2).

[2] Schrock, Douglas P., and Irene Padavic, 2007, "Negotiating hegemonic masculinity in a batterer intervention program", *Gender & Society*, 21(5); Téllez, Michelle, 2008, "Community of struggle: gender, violence, and resistance on the U.S./Mexico border", *Gender & Society*, 22(5).

[3] Tambe, Ashwini, 2005, "The elusive ingénue: a transnational feminist analysis of European prostitution in colonial Bombay", *Gender & Society*, 19(2); Tambiah, Yasmin, 2005, "Turncoat bodies: sexuality and sex work under militarization in Sri Lanka", *Gender & Society*, 19(2).

[4] Wade, Lisa, 2009, "Defining gendered oppression in U.S. newspapers: the strategic value of 'female genital mutilation'", *Gender & Society*, 23(3).

[5] Lawston, Jodie Michelle, 2009, "'We're all sisters': Bridging and legitimacy in the women's antiprison movement", *Gender & Society*, 23(5).

[6] Berns, Nancy, 2001, "Degendering the problem and gendering the blame: political discourse on women and violence", *Gender & Society*, 15(2); Ampofo, Akosua Adomako, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and Mary Osirim, 2004, "Women's and gender studies in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa: a review of research in the social sciences", *Gender & Society*, 18(6).

[7] Mirchandani, Rekha, 2006, "'Hitting is not manly': domestic violence court and the re-imagination of the patriarchal state", *Gender & Society*, 20(6).

[8] Steiner, Birthe, Marie T. Benner, Egbert Sondorp, K. Peter Schmitz, Ursula Mesmer and Sandrine, Rosenberger, 2009, "Sexual violence in the protracted conflict of DRC programming for rape survivors in South Kivu", *Conflict and Health*, 15(3).

[9] Longombe, A. O., K. M. Claude and J. Rumingo, 2008, "Fistula and traumatic genital injury from sexual violence in a conflict setting in Eastern Congo: case studies", *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31).

blatant and organized use of rape as a weapon of war has been inadequate and ineffective, as illustrated by the Rwandan case.[10] The Beijing Platform for Action, in its strategic objective D.1, calls on States to prevent and punish acts of violence against women, and we strongly emphasize the pressing need for States to fulfil their responsibilities towards women and girls in conflict situations. In order to improve the international response to violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other situations of armed conflict, we urge renewed attention to strategic objective E.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action: increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation. The Platform's paragraph 142 sets out the comprehensive agenda needed for the attainment of that objective.

3. The vulnerability of women to rape and other forms of violence begins in girlhood. A girl child is denied access to a healthy and meaningful life through such mechanisms as sexual abuse;[11] incest;[12] rape;[13] limited educational opportunities;[14] early entry into the labour market, both paid and unpaid;[15] early marriage;[16] and early pregnancy.[17] Gender discrimination in health and nutrition occurs throughout the life course of a girl child. For instance, the under-five mortality rate for girls exceeds that for boys in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, resulting in millions of "missing girls" in those regions.[18] Malnutrition affects girls much more than boys, stunting their future physical and mental growth.[19] Increasing rates of relationship violence[20] and sexual harassment of the girl child impede a healthy relationship with her body and prevent her from making her maximum potential contribution to society. We urge renewed attention to the appeals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action in its strategic objective L.5, for the elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition, and its strategic objective L.7, for the elimination of violence against girls.

---

[10] Bijleveld, Catrien, Aafke Morssinkhof and Alette Smeulers, 2009, "Counting the countless: rape victimizations during the Rwandan genocide", *International Criminal Justice Review*, 19(2).

[11] Nelson, Andrea, and Pamela Oliver, 1998, "Gender and the construction of consent in child-adult sexual contact", *Gender & Society*, 12(5).

[12] Atwood, Joan D., 2007, "When love hurts: preadolescent girls' reports of incest", *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(4).

[13] Jewkes, R., J. Levin, N. Mbananga and D. Bradshaw, 2002, "Rape of girls in South Africa", *The Lancet*, 359 (9303).

[14] Hannum, Emily, 2003, "Poverty and basic education in rural China: villages, households, and girls' and boys' enrolment", *Comparative Education Review*, 47(2).

[15] Dodson, Lisa, and Jillian Dickert, 2004, "Girls' family labor in low-income households: a decade of qualitative research", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(2).

[16] Clark, Shelley, 2004, "Early marriage and HIV risks in sub-Saharan Africa", studies in family planning, 35(3); Singh, Susheela, and Renee Samara, 1996, "Early marriage among women in developing countries", *International Family Planning Perspectives* 22(4).

[17] Guijarro, S., J. Naranjo, M. Padilla, R. Gutiérez, C. Lammers and R. Blum, 1999, "Family risk factors associated with adolescent pregnancy: study of a group of adolescent girls and their families in Ecuador", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 25(2).

[18] United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability*, New York, 2008.

[19] Choudhury, Kaneta K., Manzoor A. Hanifi, Sabrina Rasheed and Abbas Bhuiya, 2000, "Gender inequality and severe malnutrition among children in a remote rural area of Bangladesh", *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 18(3).

[20] Hall, Julie, 2000, "It hurts to be a girl: growing up poor, white, and female", *Gender & Society* 14(5).

4. When girls are subjected to systematic maltreatment and exploitation, the stage is set for abusive attacks on women, such as rape, in situations of armed conflict. We applaud Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which, according to the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, changed the image of women in conflict situations from that of exclusively victims of war to that of active participants as peacemakers, peacebuilders and negotiators (see S/PV.5294). SWS looks forward to the tenth anniversary of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and can assist the international community in the areas identified by the Special Adviser as needing improvement: raising awareness about gender disparities, incorporating gender perspectives into decision-making and advocating for women and girls.

United Nations E/CN.6/2010/NGO/32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 December 2009

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by Disabled Peoples' International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65553 (E) 220110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Disabled Peoples' International has found that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have led to very little improvement in the lives of women with disabilities around the world, particularly in developing countries. While article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an important step forward, there is much that remains to be done to ensure that women and girls with disabilities fully exercise and enjoy human rights. The following statement is divided into two parts, covering information about the situation of women with disabilities and key recommendations for change.

A. Situation of women with disabilities

2. The following information has been gathered by Disability Rights Promotion International and its partner organizations of persons with disabilities in India and Kenya. The organization is an international collaborative project working to develop tools and build capacity to monitor the rights of persons with disabilities. The information is based on both legal and policy research along with face-to-face interviews conducted with women and men with disabilities in the countries concerned. While the information presented here is not exhaustive, it outlines trends identified on this research. Disabled Peoples' International supports the aims of this project and has agreed to assist Disability Rights Promotion International and its partners by submitting this monitoring data to the fifteen-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Disabled Peoples' International finds that the trends identified in India and Kenya are very similar to the experiences of women with disabilities in other countries in which it works.

India

3. In India, Disability Rights Promotion International worked with Swadhikaar Centre for Disabilities Information, Research and Resource Development, the Asmita Resource Centre for Women, the NALSAR School of Law and the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped.

4. The 2001 Indian census estimated that there were over 9 million women with disabilities in India. Some researchers estimate that there are over 35 million women with disabilities (Bacquer and Sharma 1997). Others put the figure at 20 million, of whom 98 per cent are illiterate; less than 1 per cent of whom have access to health care and rehabilitation services (ActionAid 2003). The majority of women with disabilities in India suffer the triple discrimination of being female, disabled and poor. Not only are they socially invisible but their plight is worse than both men with disabilities and women without disabilities. Being powerless, isolated and anonymous, women with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to abuse and violence.

5. While no specific disability law in India mentions women as a group requiring special attention, the eleventh five-year plan (2007-2012) produced by the Government of India's Planning Commission observed that "Women with disabilities are considered a financial burden and social liability by their families; denied opportunities of mobility and access to education; viewed as asexual, helpless and dependant; ... and are isolated and neglected with no hope of a normal life." The plan also stated that the specific concerns of women with disabilities have

found a place neither in the government policies and programmes nor the voluntary sector. For the first time, in the eleventh plan, the situation of women with disabilities was considered in all its complexity, including the need for an intersectional understanding of discrimination in order for policy to be effective and addressing the vulnerability of poor women to triple discrimination, based on poverty, gender and disability, in significant ways. The plan explored ways in which the gender-based division of labour places women with disabilities at an additional disadvantage, both at the family and community levels. These concerns are also addressed in the national policy for persons with disabilities, although not as comprehensively as in the planning document. The plan provides a framework for future Government and non-governmental action to strengthen the position of women with disabilities.

6. In addition, the Report of the Working Group on Empowerment of Women for the eleventh Plan of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, recommends that women with disabilities be included not only as beneficiaries of gender equity but also as fieldworkers, project facilitators, survey designers and field investigators in projects with disability components in order to enhance their visibility in positive roles. It challenges negative attitudes that reduce women with disabilities to helpless objects of pity. The report proposes that there be a separate wing for women with disabilities in the Disability Commissioner's office and that women with disabilities be represented on the central and State coordination and executive committees.

7. The Indian partner organizations of Disability Rights Promotion International conducted 113 interviews with persons with various types of impairments (47 women, 66 men) in three monitoring sites in Andhra Pradesh State: Hyderabad, Kurnool and the villages of three Mandals of the Visakhapatnam District. The interviews revealed a gender pattern in experiences of discrimination among people with disabilities in India. Women interviewed faced the double discrimination of being women, as well as being women with disabilities. Women with disabilities reported facing more discrimination from their family members and in society than men, perhaps because they are discriminated against twice over, due to patriarchy and dependence. Men with disabilities reported facing the most discrimination from the Government and society. Both women and men with disabilities reported exclusion in communication and access to the physical environment.

Kenya

8. In Kenya, Disability Rights Promotion International worked with the African Union of the Blind, the Kenya Union of the Blind, the Centre for Disability Rights, Education and Advocacy and the University of Nairobi.

9. The 1997 report of the Task Force Reviewing the laws relating to persons with disabilities explicitly emphasized the need to recognize the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and girls in Kenya. The report recommended that special legal, policy and institutional mechanisms for addressing the specific forms of discrimination faced by women and girls be adopted in the new legal and policy regime for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. However, neither the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2003 nor the draft national policy recognize the multiple disadvantages women with disabilities face.

10. The partners of Disability Rights Promotion International in Kenya conducted 94 interviews with persons with various types of impairments (49 women, 45 men) in three monitoring sites: Nairobi, Nyanza and the Rift Valley. The majority of people interviewed, both women and men, thought that gender was not significant in terms of the discrimination faced by people with disabilities in Kenya. Yet, more women (32 per cent) than men (18 per cent) reported that being both female and having a disability represented a double disadvantage because of discrimination faced as women and as a person with a disability. The findings may reflect the possibility that the status of disability is an even greater barrier to people than gender, although, on a day by day basis, dual discrimination does have an impact.

11. In the workplace, people with disabilities in Kenya reported that they were exposed to numerous situations in which their rights were violated. More than 25 per cent of respondents reported specific incidences of abuse and violence in the workplace. The mistreatment of people with disabilities was reported in nearly all places of work, including domestic work. Many women reported working as maids for months without being paid. Also, some women reported sexual abuse and rape in the workplace.

12. Data gathered through the interviews showed that traditional views portraying women in the family as dependent and submissive to men increase the vulnerability of women with disabilities to discrimination. Incidences of abuse and violence were more common for women with disabilities than for women without disabilities. These incidences were also reported to occur most often in the domestic sphere, perpetrated by parents, partners and siblings. Men with disabilities, in contrast, were more likely to experience discriminatory attitudes and barriers to access in the public sphere — in their workplaces, communities and while interacting with their peers without disabilities in multiple social settings. This could be a result of men with disabilities being more likely to be outside, and women more like to be inside, the home.

B. Recommendations for change

13. All countries should ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol without reservation and should immediately fulfil their obligations thereunder, including those set out in article 6 of the Convention.

14. All countries, non-governmental organizations, funders and other development actors should ensure that women with disabilities are active participants in all development processes and programmes, including by holding key decision-making roles.